

# The Psychodynamic Processes Related to the Involvement in Peacekeeping Missions: Experiences of Slovenian Police Officers

Branko Lobnikar, Špela Vesel, Emanuel Banutai

## **Purpose:**

The purpose of this paper is to review the decade of Slovenian police officer's experiences with international peacekeeping operations. The main goal of police officers, involved in these missions, is to prevent conflicts between opposite sites, to implement basic agreements, protect humanitarian missions and reinforce policing operations in the conflict area. The purpose of the paper is to acknowledge the lessons learned while planning and implementing further cooperation of Slovenian police officers in peacekeeping (police) operations. The main purpose of the paper is to analyze the consequences of deployment to peacekeeping missions for police officers as well as their family members (partners and children) by analyzing the psychodynamic processes related to the involvement in peacekeeping missions.

## **Design/Methods/Approach:**

The paper is based on the review of literature. The empirical part of the paper presents the results of the research on a small sample of police officers ( $n = 36$ ) and their family members ( $n = 25$  partners + 35 children).

## **Findings:**

Police peacekeepers should be well prepared for different stress situations; they are exposed to various stress factors before, during, and after serving in a mission. That is why training and reintegration programmes are of great importance. We establish that respondents assess that deployment to a peacekeeping mission has a positive and negative impact on the relationships between family members. As many as  $\frac{3}{4}$  of mission members believe deployment can have a positive impact above all in the sense of strengthening the emotional ties between partners, increased mutual trust and strengthening of the partnership. For them, deployment to a peacekeeping mission is a challenge and personal experience, which can change the way they see the world.  $\frac{2}{3}$  of partners state similar positive impacts and they also believe that there is more trust between the partners after the experience with the peacekeeping mission, they treasure their time together and thus represent bigger support for each other in difficult times. As the most common problem, respondents perceived

marital problems and the occurrence of negative feelings among family members (anger, avoidance, judgment ...). A large share of respondents stressed problems with children. 43.8% of respondents also named depression as a problem.

**Research limitations/implications:**

The findings are limited to the Slovenian police and their police officer's experiences, serving in various police peacekeeping missions and their family members.

**Practical implications:**

Based on lessons learned this paper complements the results of different surveys of the researched topic. The results cannot be completely generalized, although some findings could also be useful to similar police organizations in Europe.

**Originality/Value:**

This paper addresses and explores different small scale surveys, conducted on sampled Slovenian police officers who served in peacekeeping missions and their family members. Findings could be of interest for the general as well as expert audience.

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**Keywords:** police, police officer's family, peacekeeping missions, Slovenia, stress, training and reintegration programmes, SE Europe

**Psihodinamični procesi, povezani z udeležbo v mirovnih misijah: izkušnje slovenskih policistov**

**Namen prispevka:**

Avtorji v članku analizirajo izkušnje, ki jih poročajo policisti z udeležbo v mednarodnih mirovnih misijah. Namen mednarodnih mirovnih misij je preprečitev konfliktov med dvema sprtima stranema, uveljavitev sporazumov in dogovorov, varovanje človekovih pravic in svoboščin ter okrepiti vladavino prava s pomočjo policijske dejavnosti. V članku avtorji analizirajo dosedanje izkušnje slovenskih policistov z udeležbo v mirovnih misijah, s posebnim poudarkom na posledicah, ki jih ima udeležba v mirovnih misijah na policistih in njihovih družinskih članih (partnerjih in otrocih).

**Metode:**

Članek temelji na pregledu obstoječe literature s tega področja. V empiričnem delu avtorji predstavijo rezultate empirične raziskave na majhnem vzorcu policistov (n = 36) in njihovih družinskih članov (partnerji: n = 25, otroci n = 35).

**Ugotovitve:**

Policisti, ki se udeležujejo mednarodnih mirovnih operacij, morajo biti pripravljeni na različne vrste stresnih situacij pred pričetkom, med potekom in po vrnitvi iz mirovne operacije. Da bi bili pri upravljanju s stresom uspešni, je potrebno okrepiti usposabljanja pred napotitvijo v mirovno misijo ter programe reintegracije po vrnitvi iz mirovne misije. Rezultati raziskave so pokazali, da ima udeležba v mednarodnih mirovnih operacijah tako pozitivne kot negativne posledice na policiste in tudi na njihove družinske člane. Kar tri četrtine policistov je ocenilo,

da je imela njihova udeležba v mirovni misijah pozitiven učinek na krepitev emocionalnih vezi z družinskimi člani, da se je okrepilo njihovo medsebojno zaupanje in so se izboljšali partnerski odnosi. Tudi dve tretjini partnerjev je poročalo o enakem vplivu udeležbe v mirovni misijah na njihovo družinsko/partnersko življenje, poleg tega pa poročajo, da po udeležbi bolj cenijo skupni čas s partnerjem ter da so izkušnje z odsotnostjo partnerja izboljšale njihove zmožnosti za reševanje družinskih in partnerskih težav. Kot najbolj pogoste težave, ki izhajajo iz udeležbe v mednarodnih misijah, so udeleženci raziskave poročali o nesoglasjih med partnerjema ter pojavu negativnih čustev pri posameznih družinskih članih (jeza, izogibanje, obsojanje ...). Veliko udeležencev v raziskavi poroča tudi o težavah z otroki, kar 43,8 odstotka pa jih je poročalo tudi o pojavu depresije.

**Omejitve/uporabnost raziskave:**

Rezultati raziskave so omejeni na slovenske policiste in njihove družinske člane, omejitve pa izhajajo tudi iz relativno majhnega vzorca udeležencev raziskave.

**Praktična uporabnost:**

Rezultati raziskave so uporabni predvsem pri strateškem načrtovanju udeležbe policistov v bodočih mirovni operacijah, s posebnim poudarkom na pripravi tako policistov kot njihovih družinskih članov (še posebej otrok) pred odhodom kot tudi na procesih reintegracije po vrnitvi iz mirovni misije.

**Izvirnost/pomembnost prispevka:**

Raziskava o vplivu udeležbe v mednarodni misiji na psihodinamične procese na vzorcu slovenskih policistov in njihovih družinskih članov predstavlja izvirni znanstveni pristop proučevanja dejavnikov, ki pomembno vplivajo na zmožnost policistov, da uspešno in učinkovito izvedejo naloge v mednarodnem okolju.

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**Ključne besede:** policija, policisti, policijske družine, mednarodne mirovni operacije, stres, reintegracija, usposabljanje, Slovenija, JV Evropa

## 1 INTRODUCTION

With international recognition, membership in the United Nations and other organizations, especially in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Slovenia assumed part of the responsibility for the assurance of international peace and cooperation. The Slovenian police have been actively participating in peacekeeping operations since 1997, when the National Assembly seconded the first police officer to a peacekeeping operation, namely the MAPE mission (advisory mission under the auspices of the WEU) in Albania. Members of the Slovenian police have been participating in UN peacekeeping operations since 2000.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *So far, Slovenian police officers were involved in 14 peacekeeping missions: MAPE (Albania), UNTEAT (East Timor), OSCE, EULEX and UNMIK (Kosovo); EUPM, and OHR (BiH), PROXIMA, EUPAT and OSCE SMMS (Macedonia), IPTM (Afghanistan),*

We understand peacekeeping operations as different military and non-military operations for reestablishment and maintaining peace and order. The main goal of police officers, involved in these missions, is to prevent conflicts between opposite sites, to implement basic agreements, protect humanitarian missions and reinforce policing operations in the conflict area. Police peacekeepers should be well prepared for different stress situations; they are exposed to various stress factors before, during, and after serving in a mission. That is why training and reintegration programmes are of great importance. If we can say that the training programmes for deploying to the mission are comparable to the programmes of western European police organizations, the reintegration programme after assignment does not devote enough attention to the consequences of stress.

In her article, Garb (2004) describes the tasks, mandate and work of civilian police officers in peacekeeping and other international missions, which she claims are considerably different from the tasks of military personnel and units and other personnel serving on civilian missions. Police officers live in the environments they work in and as a rule perform their tasks individually. In their residential and work environment, they do not have special protection and are often on their own as regards logistics. Good knowledge of English is demanded from civilian police officers on missions, because every police task includes the elaboration of documents (criminal charges, reports and information, study material, etc). Their work in unstable social environments, where peacekeeping operations usually take place, is very demanding, sometimes even dangerous. At the same time, next to the conditions in the local environment (parties to a conflict, deficient legislation, specific features of the local culture, etc.), the requirements of the mandate of the peacekeeping forces, work in an international work environment, distance from home, etc. must be considered in peacekeeping operations as well.

The support of the family and regulated business, legal and financial affairs are very important already prior to departure to the mission and above all during the mission. Due to unregulated issues at home, a police officer cannot completely focus on his work on the mission. His/her work performance is low and the member of the peacekeeping mission suffers as well, because he/she cannot help his family from a foreign country. The police officer feels powerless and the family back home is dissatisfied, because it is left to its own resources.

As is evident from the title itself, the paper reviews the psychodynamic processes of police officers and their families, which arise from the decision to get involved in a peacekeeping mission. The whole family goes through certain phases of the peacekeeping mission, in which it deals with stress situations that affect an individual member of the family as well as family life.

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*JIPTC (Jordan), OSCE (Serbia), and EUMM (Georgia). 285 police officers were involved in international missions. This number is comparable to other EU member states as it represents 0.3% of all employed police officers (Ministry of the Interior. Police, 2011).*

## 1.1 The Psychodynamic Processes Related to the Involvement in Peacekeeping Missions

Members of peacekeeping missions are often exposed to numerous stress factors, which can be physical or mental. The police officer - "peacekeeper" - is exposed to specific stress factors before, during and after the peacekeeping operation. Members of these missions are, regardless of the type of the peacekeeping mission in which they participate, constantly facing life threatening situations (Kotnik-Dvojmoč, 2002). They are intermediaries between the two warring sides and must respond to different challenges on both sides in dangerous circumstances. Despite pressure, which they feel while being aware of the danger, they must keep a cool head. They must know how to react correctly in a critical situation, whereby the use of weapons is limited to a minimum. Often, the use of force is completely prohibited. The disparity between the scope of personal sacrifices, efforts, trouble and importance or impact on the course of the peacekeeping mission results in an unbearable situation for members.

Susceptibility to stress factors is objective and subjective respectively depends on the individual that is exposed to stress. In continuation, we present the most common factors contributing to stress when police officers are deployed to peacekeeping missions. Factors related to the individual include the personal health of the individual and the family, the individual's capabilities to process stressful situations when reaching the decision and leaving, the capabilities of the family to process stressful situations, the settlement of the situation in the home environment, regulation of material and financial conditions and the feeling of safety in family relations (De Soir, 1996).

Stress factors, related to the deployment to a peacekeeping mission, among other include the foreseen time for preparation for deployment, previous experiences of the family with long-term absence, important family events during the absence, age of children as well as confidence and support, which the family has from the organization and the environment (Barabé, 1999). Members of international missions show signs of concern, fear and a feeling of burden and anger (Roberts, 2002) as well as loneliness (Rook, 2000). Psychological stress can represent such a high burden on members of international missions that they change their behaviour, abuse alcohol, violate rules, do not perform their duties, their mental health deteriorates, moral falls and they are no longer capable of performing their work. Members of peacekeeping mission often develop a posttraumatic stress disorder due to events in the field already during the mission, but often also after the conclusion of the mission (Carlson & Ruzek, 2002; Roger & Leigh, 2002). Barabé (1999) enumerates stress factors related to the mission itself: informing the individual and family, duration of the mission, especially if it is uncertain, limited contacts with family and communication possibilities, living and work conditions (food, hygiene, recreation), tragedies of families, children and individual civilians in the area, threat to life (armed attacks, car bombs, booby-traps), restriction of movement and other.

Stress situations, faced by a member of the peacekeeping mission, can raise feelings of melancholy, apathy, despair, concern and anxiety, which are present on

a daily basis. This leads to depression, which considerably alters how an individual experiences the world and affects his self-image. His partner or other family members can also face depression due to stress and overload. They withdraw into isolation and give up activities that are important for their assertion and also lose interest in things, which made them happy before. The quality of life deteriorates considerably (U. S. Army Research Institute, 2001).

We established that stress factors do not affect only the member of the peacekeeping mission, but all family members. Separation from and missing family members is one of the most common stress factors. It arises from the fact that members are separated from their families and friends for longer periods of time. Separation raises concerns on both sides about how the loved ones live, whether they are safe, if they can survive a long period on their own and concerns about the relationship between partners (Selected RAND Abstracts, 2005). A member of the mission and his partner miss tenderness, intimate and emotional support, which often results in members of peacekeeping missions cheating on their partners during their time off from the mission (U. S. Army Research Institute, 2001).

Returning from the peacekeeping mission can be stressful as well. The most commonly mentioned factors related to the return are changes to the living environment, integration into the living and work environment at home, expectations of the member of the mission and different or larger obligations to others (family, children) (Barabé, 1999). Ford (2002) reports about the development of the posttraumatic stress syndrome also among family members of members of peacekeeping missions. Just like different people react differently to traumatic experience, families react differently to emotional and behavioural changes of a family member (Roberts, 2002). The most common dilemma for the majority of partners is the feeling of being trapped in a vicious circle. It seems as if they are walking a fine, strung wire, which is about to snap. Wives or girlfriends must namely constantly manage the balance between offering help to their children and partner, who is on a peacekeeping mission, and waiting for others to help them. They must constantly sacrifice themselves and their needs and try not to be seen as selfish (Harrell, 2000). The majority of partners believe during the mission that they are solely responsible for the emotional stability of the family and that they are the sole caretakers of their children. Due to these duties, which hang solely on their shoulders, they start to complain. Feelings of anger, despair, disappointment and incompetence overwhelm them. A member of the peacekeeping mission cannot help his loved ones due to absence, which burdens him. The same feelings materialize in him as well; he is angry, desperate, disappointed and helpless (Pace, 2004).

Wives or girlfriends, who are secondary victims of PTSD through their husband or boyfriend, usually feel discomfort as regards changes in their relationship with the partner and in the entire family. Unpleasant changes represent a burden for them as well. Problems, which affect husbands or boyfriends, become their problems too. The alleged feeling of full responsibility creates an enormous pressure: they are afraid about the partner losing his job, because they could be solely responsible for the financial situation in the family. Leyva (2003) describes stress situations in partners of members of peacekeeping missions: there is confusion about the

possibility to resolve the problem of their partners and the problems of the family. They feel that they can no longer support and help each other. Both have low self-esteem, worry constantly, face anxiety as well as a feeling of helplessness. They feel responsible for the rage and furious behaviour of their partners (assuming the blame). They are afraid to say anything to their husbands, because they do not know how they will react. They do not know how they would react or answer specific actions and questions from their husbands. They feel incapable of helping their husbands in their distress and do not complain about the emotional, verbal or physical abuse against them. They suffer from emotional and financial instability and can no longer react in such crises. They do not feel the need to satisfy their own demands. They feel as if their help is not wanted and that their efforts and actions are worthless in the eyes of their partners. They feel responsible for managing family affairs. In addition to work, they perform all household duties, feed the children and also try to perform the tasks that were previously performed by their partner. On the other hand, they fear that the partner will become completely dependent. They feel that they are the reason for the partner's negative behaviour or that they cause the bad mood. They have a feeling of alienation from their partner and sense alienation between the husband and children. It seems to them that their partner is no longer a family person, because he no longer acts like a husband and father and does not perform the duties of a partner and father (Leyva, 2003). The U. S. Army Research Institute (2001) reports about problems arising between partners after the return from the mission, because partners can become alienated after long-term separation. The desire for sexual intercourse falls, there is a lack of sexual drive or the inability of physical excitement during intercourse as a consequence of physical, but above all psychological problems.

However, partner's participation in peacekeeping missions does not have only a negative impact. Wilks (2011) notes the occurrence of hope and pride. The partner, who stayed at home during the peacekeeping mission, can be proud that he took care of everything during the partner's absence. This feeling is especially visible if the member of the mission is proud of his partner and expresses it.

The absence of one of the parents also affects the behaviour of children. Bell and Schumm (2000), and Eochus and McCormick (1999) report about the development of numerous different stress symptoms among children in families, where one of the partners is absent due to participation in a peacekeeping mission. All these stress factors can contribute to the development of health and psychical problems. Children often do not want to express their thoughts and feelings, because they do not understand the situation and its essence. Parents usually do not do anything until the child changes his behaviour (becomes aggressive, shuts himself away, is indifferent) or until signs of disease appear. The authors stress that a child needs someone, who listens. If his parents are suffering, children assume the blame and feel responsible. A child can shut himself away; become violent, numb, depressed, rebellious, slacks in school, etc., which represents an additional burden on raising a child as well as raises additional concerns and burdens (U. S. Army Research Institute, 2001).

Whether a family has turned into a functional system is visible after the return from the international mission in the reintegration and stabilization phase. Some

find a way to deepen relationships; they can improve their quality of life. Common reactions are feelings of intimacy, closeness, trust and connection, but also feelings of being lost, alienated, lack of trust and uncertainty. The challenges of separation and reunion offer opportunities for the improvement of relationships and for the assessment of changes which occurred in both partners and between partners. Within the family, roles and responsibilities are determined and all changes unite in a renewed, rejuvenated relationship (Moelker & van der Kloet, 2003).

## 2 DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE, METHOD AND INSTRUMENTS

The research plan foresaw that the research will include a sample of 107 members of peacekeeping missions and their partners. A questionnaire was prepared for the purposes of the research and was sent to participants via mail. The questionnaires were divided into two parts; the first part was earmarked for the mission member and the second for the partner, who stayed at home. The latter also answered questions about feelings and emotions of their children (in the interpretation of the results of the research we must consider the limitation of the research, which arises from the parent's accounting on the feelings of children – if children answered these questions alone, we might have received different answers, but these answers above all reflect the perception of their parents). Individual content sets of questions were designed to measure the assessments of the quality of partnership relationships before and after the peacekeeping mission, by police officers, their partners and children. Participants of the research answered statements, whereby a five-level Likert scale (ranging from 1 - strongly disagree/not characteristic; to 5 - Strongly agree/ very characteristic) was used.

Of the 107 sent out questionnaires, 36 were filled out by members of peacekeeping missions, all men, and 25 by their partners. 35 children were included in the research. The majority of respondents (77.8%) were in the age group of 31 to 40 years, which is also one of the conditions set by the Police for deployment to a peacekeeping mission, with active police experience (at least 8 years). Proportionally to the age of respondents, the predominant part (60.0%) of their partners is in this age group as well. The majority of children of families participating in the survey were aged up to ten years. The respondents are mostly married (87.5%) or live with a common law partner. The majority of respondents have children, namely 76.0%. Half of respondents have secondary education, followed by respondents with high or university education (28%), while the least respondents have higher and vocational education. The educational structure of their partners is somewhat different as 2/3 have secondary education, 26% have high or university education, 4% have higher and 9% vocational education. The majority of answers, 52.9% were submitted by police officers, followed by independent police inspectors (14.7%) and police and senior police inspectors with 11.8% each.

Participation in the research was voluntary and anonymous. The limitations of the research arise from the small sample of participants in the research, but the results represent first empirical findings from the analyzed content and can be a good basis for further researches in the area.

### 3 RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH AND INTERPRETATION

We asked the participants of the survey to describe their partnership relations before deployment to the peacekeeping mission. The results of answers to the question (we added up answers “mostly true” and “completely true”) on the quality of their relationships are presented in table 1 below.

#### 3.1 Answers of Police Officers

STATEMENT	TRUE %
I had enough time for my family before going to the mission.	81.3
My partner agreed with my decision to go to the mission.	78.1
I knew that it will not be easy to reconnect with my partner after coming home from the mission.	18.8
Parents agreed with my decision to go to the mission.	59.4
My partner and I prepared the children for my absence because of the mission.	65.6
I knew it will not be easy to be a father again after coming home from the mission.	37.5
I was acquainted with the possible impact of the mission on family life.	78.1
The police would also have to include family members in the preparation for the mission.	78.1
The period before departure to the mission was difficult.	37.5
It seemed to me that my partner and I grew apart.	25.0
I was concerned how the family will get along without me.	43.8
Children were angry at me when my partner and I told them about my deployment to the mission.	3.1
Separation from my partner and other family members was difficult.	53.1
My partner and I talked before the mission how to resolve family problems if they occur.	62.5
I was satisfied with the preparations for separation from my family.	46.9

**Table 1:**  
Assessment of family relationships before the peacekeeping mission by police officers

It is evident from the table that the decision of officers to go on a mission was reached in consent with their partners and that they were well prepared for departure. The majority of them spent enough time with their families before departure and were acquainted with possible consequences of deployment on family life. In the period before the mission, mission members established that balance between preparations for the mission and dedicating attention to their families is necessary. Unlike single candidates for the mission, married candidates perceive the coordination of professional and domestic obligations as a little more stressful. More than 3/4 of respondents assess that the closest family members would also have to be included in the preparations for the mission within the framework of the police. Just less than 50% of respondents were satisfied with preparations for separation from their families.

Table 2 shows answers to the question on how police officers would assess relationships with their partners during the peacekeeping mission (we added up answers “mostly true” and “completely true”).

STATEMENT	TRUE %
During the mission I was in constant contact (for instance: phone, internet...) with my family.	96.9
During the mission I was thinking about my family a lot.	78.1
I suffered because I was separated from my family.	21.9
Temporary absence from my family had a positive impact on me.	37.5
During the mission I relaxed and forgot about family problems.	18.8
I completely trusted my partner.	78.1
I did not have enough contact with my family.	18.8
Family members encouraged me and gave me strength in the worst moments.	59.4
I missed family members very much.	62.5
The time in the peacekeeping mission passed quickly.	65.6
My family missed my help in domestic chores.	46.9
My family was a stress factor that affected my work obligations.	3.1
I was burdened with the problems of family members (school results, behaviour, health problems...)	12.5
I was burdened with the fights with my partner over the phone.	6.3
I knew where to go in the event of personal and family problems.	81.3

**Table 2:**  
Assessment  
of family  
relationships  
during the  
peacekeeping  
mission

Almost all respondents to the survey had constant contact with families during the mission, which can indicate that they missed their families very much. Contacts with their families gave them strength and time in the peacekeeping mission passed quickly for them. Half of the respondents assess that families missed their closeness and help in everyday chores, but did not burden them with their problems. 81.3% of respondents knew where to turn for help in the event of personal and family problems. During the mission, mission members are burdened with the tasks they perform and different stressful situations they deal with in their work and are also burdened with the concern for their families and their problems.

Table shows answers to the question how police officers assess relations with their partners after their return from the peacekeeping mission.

All respondents assess that family members were happy about their return to the home environment and a large share stated their families were proud of them after their return. During their absence they realized that family and relatives mean a lot to them. Partners entrusted each other the problems they dealt with during the separation. 21.9% of mission members admitted that their relationship with the partner was weaker and that they had problems resuming intimate relations after the return (18.8%). If we look at the assessment of this statement made by their partners, we see that a similar share of partners agreed with this statement,

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namely 23.8%. Based on this fact we can claim that deployment to the peacekeeping mission had some negative consequences for these couples.

**Table 3:**  
Assessment of family relationships after returning from the peacekeeping mission

STATEMENT	TRUE %
My family was proud of me after I returned home.	81.3
My partner confided all the problems she was facing during my absence.	68.8
My participation in the mission harmed family life.	21.9
My family was happy about my return.	100.0
Family life changed after the return.	37.5
My participation in the mission had a negative impact on family relationships.	28.1
The relationship with my partner weakened after my return.	21.9
My partner and I had problems resuming intimate relations.	18.8
My family listened to my problems, impressions and experience at the peacekeeping mission.	75.0
After returning from the mission, I felt that past experience represents a burden for the reinstatement of real family contacts.	18.8
I realized after my return how much my family meant to me.	71.9
The money I earned helped solve family problems.	46.9
After the return I noticed that my children were estranged.	21.9
My child wanted all my attention.	43.8
My child rejected my tenderness and did not trust me.	9.4

**Table 4:**  
Types of problems detected by participants during the peacekeeping mission – sum “very frequent” and “not so frequent” in percent (%)

PROBLEMS	%
Marital problems	84.4
Problems with children	75.0
Family violence	18.8
Drug and alcohol abuse	34.4
Financial problems	59.4
Depression	43.8
Problems with sex	37.5
Negative feelings among family members (anger, avoidance, ...)	68.8
Sleeping problems	50.0
Health problems	50.0

As the most common problem, respondents perceived marital problems (84.4%) and the occurrence of negative feelings among family members (anger, avoidance, judgment ...). A large share (75.0%) of respondents stressed problems with children. 43.8% of respondents also named depression as a problem. Respondents assess that deployment to a peacekeeping mission also had a negative impact on their possibilities for promotion (40.6%). Mission members complained of conflict communication on the job or mobbing by the employer. Some missed open dialogue of the employer with the member of the peacekeeping mission. 40.6%

of respondents assessed that the peacekeeping mission has a negative impact on the relationship and love between partners and as many as 96.9% of respondents stated that deployment to the peacekeeping mission has a positive impact on the financial position of the family.

### 3.2 The Impact of Deployment on Children and Family Members

Deployment to a peacekeeping mission can also have an impact on the children of members of peacekeeping missions. Table 5 shows the results of answers on the impact on children, whereby the answers with statements “mostly true” and “completely true” are added up.

Did the absence of a parent have an impact on the problems with children stated below?	TRUE %
Accepting the fact that only one parent will remain with them.	50.0
Children fear for you during your absence.	41.7
The occurrence or increase of aggressive behaviour of children at home and/or at school.	20.8
Lack of concentration.	25.0
Concern and/or too many burdens.	41.7
Depression.	12.5
Lower grades and school success.	16.7
Health problems, which were not present before.	0.0
Refusal of social life and withdrawal.	12.5
Behavioural changes.	29.2

**Table 5:** The assessment of the impact of deployment to a peacekeeping mission on children - sum “very frequent” and “not so frequent” in percent (%)

Members of peacekeeping missions assessed that their children had difficulties accepting the fact that only one of the parents will remain with them and that their absence causes concern and/or places a high burden on their children. All of them believed that the occurrence of health problems was not related to their departure and only a few (12.5%) believed that the occurrence of depression with children was related to it. The percentage of answers regarding the behavioural changes of their children is a little higher (29.2%). The statement that children missed their father very much (88.9%) and those they wanted more attention and tenderness stands out. 33.3% of children changed their behaviour, the percentage of those, who had difficulties controlling their emotions, was a little lower. Parents, who stayed home, realized that their child became more independent (61.1%), which can be exposed as a positive consequence of the absence of a parent deployed to a mission.

School children respond to changes in the family environment and the absence of a parent by recording worse results in school, becoming rebellious and undisciplined. Of course they miss their parent, who was deployed to the mission, especially if they were more attached to that parent than to the parent, who stayed

at home. They feel abandoned, desperate and neglected. An example: *“My 9-year old son had trouble accepting the departure of his father. He was angry at him and at me. He withdrew and became very stubborn. When we fought, he was crying and screaming: Daddy, do not die!”* Teenagers just like school children have problems at school and change their behaviour. They try to assert their rights and if they make a mistake they state as the reason the absence of the parent, who left them to go on a mission, and the incorrect upbringing by the parent, who stayed at home. Rebellion and disobedience come first. A statement from the wife of a police officer deployed to a peacekeeping mission: *“My older son was nearly expelled from school. He did not want to do anything and participate in anything, nothing mattered to him. Although I did my best, I was not able to get him interested in anything. After his father returned, his behaviour changed considerably.”*

The decision of a police officer to be involved in a peacekeeping mission next to children also affects their partners. Table 6 shows the answers of partners of police officers deployed to a peacekeeping mission (we added up answers “mostly true” and “completely true”).

**Table 6:**  
The assessment of family relationships before the peacekeeping mission by the partners of police officers deployed to peacekeeping missions - sum “very frequent” and “not so frequent” in percent (%)

STATEMENT	TRUE %
The decision on the deployment of the partner to the mission was reached by common consent.	76.2
I was well informed about work conditions, about my partner’s work and the conditions of the mission.	38.1
I was angry, when my partner decided to get involved in the mission.	9.5
My partner and I had an excellent relationship.	85.7
Expecting the loss of my partner caused fear.	42.9
The period before the departure of my partner to the mission was difficult.	52.4
My partner did not devote enough attention to family before departure.	19.0
Tension and restlessness could be felt among family members before departure.	47.6
It was difficult to explain to children why their father is leaving.	19.0
Separation from my partner was difficult.	90.5
It seemed that my partner and I were estranged.	23.8
Assuming the tasks and duties of the partner, who left, was difficult.	28.6
I was afraid for the safety of my partner.	76.2
I was acquainted with the possible consequences of the mission on family life.	52.4
I was afraid for the safety of everyone, who stayed home.	9.5

The phase before the mission is a period, which includes mental, physical and material preparations for deployment to the mission for participants and their family partners. The partners preparing for a mission should talk about their expectations from one another before the departure, although we all know it is easier to talk about it than actually do it. More than half of the partners of mission members agreed that the period before the departure of their partner was

difficult, while 37.5% answered the question affirmatively. This means that the period before the mission was more stressful for partners than for the participants themselves. The expectation to lose their partner raises fear. The large majority of partners (76.2%) stressed that the decision on deployment was reached by mutual consent, just like members of peacekeeping missions. They perceived a higher level of tension and restlessness among family members, which made the acceptance of the fact that family members will be separated from a beloved person for a longer period of time even more difficult. Since mission members devote a lot of attention to preparations and are excited about the coming mission before departure, it can happen that they leave care for family to their partner and even neglect their partner, which can cause conflict among partners. Unlike participants, partners stated they were badly informed about work conditions, the work of their partner and the conditions on the mission.

STATEMENT	%
Communication with the partner during the mission was adequate	66.7
I missed my partner very much during the first weeks of the mission	95.2
During my partner's absence I felt lonely	57.1
I thought about my partner during the duration of the mission	57.1
I was concerned about my partner's safety	61.9
At the beginning I had a hard time without my partner	28.6
The family was facing discords and conflicts	14.3
I was mentally and psychically burdened due to my partner's absence	47.6
I realized I was doing fine in my life despite my partner's absence	90.5
I missed my partner very much half way through the mission	42.9
The time of separation passed very quickly	38.1
My partner's absence had a positive impact on me	33.3
The thought of my partner's return always made me cheerful	95.2
Feelings of discomfort, anxiety and concern arose just before my partner's return	19.0
I had to seek help (any) during my partner's absence	14.3

**Table 7:** Assessment of family relationships during the peacekeeping mission by the partners of police officers deployed to peacekeeping missions (sum of claims "mostly true" and "completely true" in percent)

95.2% of respondents missed their partner very much in the first weeks of the mission and they felt lonely. The thought of their partner's return always made them happy. Almost half (47.6%) of partners of mission members were mentally and physically heavily burdened by the absence of their partner, but they realized that they get along quite well in life despite the absence of their partner. After mission members departed for the mission, partners quickly realized that they will have to provide for everything themselves, settle problems at home and adopt important decisions for a specified period. When they get used to a new way of life, which they control successfully, they start realizing that they control everything and become more self-confident. They trust themselves and know that they can do anything themselves. 1/3 of respondents stated their partner's absence had a

positive impact on them. Only 14.3% of respondents had to find help during the absence of their boyfriend/husband.

Table 8 shows answers to the question how partners of police officers on peacekeeping missions assess relationships with their partner after his return from the peacekeeping mission (we added up answers “mostly true” and “completely true”).

**Table 8:**  
Assessment of family relationships after the return from the peacekeeping mission by the partners of police officers - sum “very frequent” and “not so frequent” in percent (%)

STATEMENT	TRUE %
My partner was proud of me after his return.	71.4
I was proud of my partner after his return.	85.7
My partner entrusted me with all the problems and experience he had during the peacekeeping mission.	61.9
My partner listened to my problems after his return.	76.2
I was very relieved after my partner returned home.	85.7
The time of his return was a time of joy, delight and happiness.	95.2
The relationship with my partner was more stable after his return.	85.7
My partner expected that nothing changed at home.	76.2
My partner considered and respected me more after his return.	33.3
My partner dedicated more attention to me and other family members after his return than before the mission.	47.6
We had difficulties adjusting to one another after the return.	33.3
My partner and I fought about unimportant and petty issues all the time after the return.	33.3
Many things changed after my partner returned.	33.3
My partner wanted to decide on everything after his return.	9.5
My partner and I had difficulties reinstating an intimate relationship after his return.	23.8
I did not want my partner’s touches or closeness after his return.	14.3
Our relationship is still not the same as it was before deployment.	33.3
My partner’s behaviour changed considerably.	23.8
I have the feeling that my partner withdrew.	33.3
Our relationship became weak.	23.8
I think about separating from my partner sometimes.	9.5

Almost all questioned partners (92.5%) described the time of return of mission members as a time of joy, delight and happiness. Just as many believe that their relationship with the partner became firmer after his return. 87.5% of partners were relieved when their partner came home. 1/4 of respondents assessed that their partner’s behaviour changed considerably, which was a reason for a weaker relationship between the partners and caused problems in the reinstatement of an intimate relationship. Several (33.3%) felt that the mission member withdrew, which could have been a consequence of stressful events, which the mission member witnessed during the peacekeeping mission.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of the presented study represent a basis for better comprehension of the position of members of peacekeeping missions and their families. The findings of the research must be assessed from the point of view of limitations of this empirical study, which includes a relatively small sample that cannot be generalized to the entire population of police officers, involved in peacekeeping missions, and their family members.

Police officers, who participated in the survey, recommended that the police could organize seminars or workshops, which would present the positive and negative consequences of deployment to a peacekeeping mission, while police officers, who already returned from a peacekeeping operation, would present their experience. Gatherings, at which future participants and their family members would meet with families that already “survived” a mission and could warn about the most important problems a family is facing before, during and after the mission, as well as provide advice on how to “survive” the peacekeeping mission, are also desired. Some mission members want someone, who could advise on the settlement of marital problems, which formed during the participant’s absence, while others want a psychologist, who would be available to participants as well as family members.

The results of the research show that all police officers, involved in a peacekeeping mission, entrusted their problems to their partner and/or friend. As regards the percentage of who they confided their problems to, colleagues are next, while the lowest share (one third) would look for help within the framework of spiritual care. The reason for this low share can lie in the fact that the Police do not provide spiritual care at all. Results showed that 68.8% of respondents would turn to the Police professional service in the event of personal or family problems, which indicates the need among mission members for increased engagement of the service. The organization can provide different assistance depending on the variety of problems, which individuals face. It is essential that the police officer, member of a peacekeeping mission, recognizes his problem and admits it, is self-critical and prepared to accept help. Help can take the form of organization and payment of health services (for instance: taking a formulated test and interview with a selected psychologist, who prepares an opinion on the adequacy of the member of the peacekeeping mission and whether he can continue with the mission or not), in the organization of an interview of an expert with the partner of the mission member and/or their children, in the organization of a free care for pre-school children, in offering assistance in different tasks following a request, etc. Anyhow, this assistance is evident all the time in the fact that the member of the peacekeeping mission knows he is never alone and that he has an important mission. Even small attention, like a card for personal or national holiday, shows the mission member and his family that someone is thinking about them and that they are not alone with their problems in their worst hours.

Children included in the research changed their behaviour and emotional state during the absence of their father. The absence of the father might be especially problematic for boys, who can become uncertain about their manhood. They

respond to it by developing an excessively masculine part of their nature, which causes problems for mothers. A son, who develops in an overly masculine manner, might become insubordinate, aggressive, uncontrolled and unpleasant in the circle of the family and outside it. Girls also suffer due to the absence of the father, from emotional reasons as well as because the parent of another gender plays an important role in the creation of the child's image on the model role of parents. (Fontana, 1995) The second problem, which children with a single parent sometimes face, is that the parent demands emotional support from them, which the adult, absent partner would actually have to provide. 83.3% of children were happy that their fathers returned. Mothers realized that children became more attached to them during their partner's absence. After the father's return, some children no longer obeyed their mother, which could be a consequence of indulgence of the mission member in upbringing due to long-term separation from their children. Based on the above-mentioned statements we can again confirm that the absence of a parent can also have a positive impact on the child, because as many as 70% became more independent. The deployment of a parent to a peacekeeping mission, his long-term absence and finally return also represent stressful situations for children, if not even more than for the parent. Looking at the results of the research, we can notice that half of the children had a difficult time accepting the deployment of a parent to a mission, but the return also represented a big change for the family environment. During the peacekeeping mission, children grew physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Due to less life experience, they cannot regulate or recognize stress and control their emotions. This results in behavioural changes or lack of behaviour. Changes are of course related to the age of children. We must be aware that children are not "small adults", but developing individuals, who constantly and rapidly change their thinking and behavioural pattern.

Members of peacekeeping missions and their family members face numerous stressful situations, negative emotions and feelings as well as numerous problems, which make their family life more difficult, in the time before, during and after the mission. Periods, through which these families go, bring changes and conflict situations into family relationships and actions. That is why partner and family relationships can deteriorate. After the return of the member of the peacekeeping mission back home, the situation in relationships and family problems can deteriorate and intensify, which makes the reinstatement of "normal" family life more difficult. We can say that a peacekeeping mission represents a considerable test for the partnership as well as for relationships between family members. If we look at the results of the research, we establish that respondents, mission members, as well as their partners, assess that deployment to a peacekeeping mission has also a positive impact on the relationships between family members. As many as 3/4 of mission members believe deployment can have a positive impact above all in the sense of strengthening the emotional ties between partners, increased mutual trust and strengthening of the partnership. For them, deployment to a peacekeeping mission is a challenge and personal experience, which can change the way they see the world. 2/3 of partners state similar positive impacts and they also believe that there is more trust between the partners after the experience with the peacekeeping

mission, they treasure their time together and thus represent bigger support for each other in difficult times.

It is important that police continue with a special "reintegration" program, which includes the determination of the psychophysical state of every police officer when he returns from the peacekeeping operation. For this purpose, a medical examination and an interview with the psychologist, based on which methods, manner and duration of reintegration are determined for every individual separately, take place. The office for helping participants of peacekeeping missions and their family members should continue with the so-called "anti-stress program for police officers", which includes a reinstatement of a prevention model of psycho-hygiene activities, and which was initiated in 1998 (Ministry of the Interior. Police, 2011).

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#### About the Authors:

**Branko Lobnikar, PhD**, Associate Professor of Policing and Management of Security Organizations, University of Maribor, Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security. He is a former police officer; his main research interest lies in researching domestic and international police operations, police deviance, human resource management, organizational behaviour and different agents of policing. He serves as a police expert for OSCE, COE and DCAF in different countries in SE Europe and Asia. Telephone: +386 1 300 8345, Fax: +386 1 230 2687, E-mail: [branko.lobnikar@fvv.uni-mb.si](mailto:branko.lobnikar@fvv.uni-mb.si)

**Špela Vesel, BA** in Political Sciences, MA candidate at the University of Maribor, Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security. The main topics of research interest are studies of the psychodynamics of police officers and soldiers on peacekeeping missions and women in police and in the army. E-mail: [spela.vesel@gmail.com](mailto:spela.vesel@gmail.com)

**Emanuel Banutai**, PhD Candidate and Young Researcher, University of Maribor, Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security, researching police management, leadership competencies and police cooperation. Telephone: +386 1 300 8337, Fax: +386 1 230 2687, E-mail: [emanuel.banutai@fvv.uni-mb.si](mailto:emanuel.banutai@fvv.uni-mb.si)